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(190) FOURTH LEAD CIA-LETTER

WASHINGTON, JULY 28 (AP)-THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE FORGAVE CIA DIRECTOR RICHARD M. HELMS TODAY FOR A LETTER EXPRESSING PLEASURE AT A NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL CRITICAL OF CHAIRMAN J. W. FULBRIGHT, D-ARK.

FULBRIGHT TOLD NEWSMEN AFTER THE NEW HEAD OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY WAS CLOSETED WITH THE COMMITTEE FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS THAT HE REGARDED THE LATTER AS "A CLOSED INCIDENT."

AND WHEN HELMS CAME OUT, HE SAID "I REALIZE IT WAS A MISTAKE. I REGRET IT AND I HAVE APOLOGIZED."

FULBRIGHT AND OTHER SENATORS SAID NO ONE VOICED ANY SUPPORT FOR A DEMAND BY SEN. WAYNE MORSE, D-ORE., THAT HELMS RESIGN. ALTHOUGH A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, MORSE DID NOT ATTEND THE MEETING.

FULBRIGHT SAID HELMS TOLD THE COMMITTEE THAT AN ASSISTANT DRAFTED THE LETTER BUT THAT HE SIGNED IT ALONG WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER LETTERS SUBMITTED TO HIM AT THE SAME TIME.

"HE WAS VERY FORTHRIGHT AND I CERTAINLY ACCEPTED HIS APOLOGY," SAID FULBRIGHT. HE TERMED HELMS "A VERY COMPETENT MAN."

FULBRIGHT SAID HELMS EXPLAINED TO THE COMMITTEE THAT HE DIDN'T FOCUS HIS ATTENTION ON THE LETTER AS THOROUGHLY AS HE SHOULD HAVE BEFORE HE SIGNED IT.

"MR. HELMS HAS COME OUT AND STATED THAT HE MADE A MISTAKE AND HE REGRETS IT," SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER MIKE MANSFIELD OF MONTANA TOLD NEWSMEN.

IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING, MORSE ACCUSED HELMS OF INJECTING HIMSELF AND THE CIA INTO DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, AND CALLED ON HELMS TO RESIGN. MANSFIELD SAID MORSE'S STATEMENT WAS READ AT THE MEETING, BUT DREW NO SUPPORT.

"HE MADE A GOOD IMPRESSION," SEN. JOSEPH S. CLARK, D-PA., SAID OF HELMS.

"IT WAS A STRAIGHTFORWARD REPORT; EVERYBODY FEELS BETTER BECAUSE OF IT," SAID SEN. GALE MCGEE, D-WYO.

MCGEE SAID HELMS DESCRIBED HIS LETTER AS A TOTAL MISTAKE. AND THE WYOMING SENATOR SAID THE HELMS' LETTER APPARENTLY WAS NOT INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION.

HE SAID THE INCIDENT, AND HELMS' TESTIMONY, HAVE EDUCATED PEOPLE IN HOW NOT TO CONDUCT THEIR AFFAIRS. "IT CLEARED THE AIR," MCGEE SAID.

MANSFIELD SAID HELMS "OUGHT TO BE GIVEN A CHANCE."

THE ST. LOUIS GLOBE-DEMOCRAT, WHICH CARRIED THE EDITORIAL ENTITLED "BRICKBATS FOR FULBRIGHT," ALSO PUBLISHED THE LETTER BEARING HELMS' NAME.

THE CIA DIRECTOR, WHO WENT INTO A CLOSED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE THIS MORNING FOR QUESTIONING ABOUT THE LETTER, APOLOGIZED TO FULBRIGHT AFTER THE STORM BROKE IN THE SENATE.

MORSE, A MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, PUT OUT A STATEMENT IN ADVANCE OF TODAY'S SESSION ACCUSING HELMS OF MEDDLING IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND SAYING HE COULD BEST SERVE THE COUNTRY BY RESIGNING.

WHEN NEWSMEN ASKED FULBRIGHT FOR COMMENT ON MORSE'S STATEMENT, HE SAID "I THINK IT'S PREMATURE." HE ADDED, "THAT IS WHAT TODAY'S HEARING IS ALL ABOUT."

MANSFIELD, REJECTING THE DEMAND FOR HELMS' RESIGNATION, SAID "I THINK HE MADE A MISTAKE. HE HAS ADMITTED IT AND FACED UP TO IT. I THINK IT WILL BE A GOOD LESSON."

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